

# Top 10 tips for learning to ride – a woman's perspective

Motorcycle instructor Laura Smith shares some riding advice.



## 1 Try before you buy

Lots of training schools offer taster sessions, which are designed to give a positive first-time experience of what it's like to ride a motorcycle. Doing this with a qualified instructor is wise, as they will give bespoke and qualified advice on the best way forward.

## 2 Research

Not all motorcycle training schools are the same, so consider 'shopping around' and don't choose based on location, price or a promise that training will be quick and easy. Websites, social media, reviews and trusted recommendations can all help, but a top tip would be to pick up the phone, have a chat and ask some questions.

## 3 Set your own pace

Learning a new skill takes time. Riding a motorbike is no different.



Compulsory Basic Training (CBT) is generally advertised as a one-day course, but this doesn't always mean that one day is sufficient to reach the minimum safe standard for a certificate to be issued. Time taken to complete CBT is unimportant versus the value of having sufficient skill and confidence to ride unaccompanied.

Intensive courses can also seem like a great way to gain a full bike licence, but added time pressures can hinder progress. Laying proper foundations of basic motorcycle control can have a positive impact on future riding, well beyond passing the test. Consider the benefits of finding a school that offers 'pay-as-you-go' instruction, where training can be taken at an appropriate pace.

## 4 Preparation

Training schools generally give good advice on preparation, such as what to bring on the day (i.e. driving licence, glasses, a packed lunch and adequate clothing). At the very least, wear sturdy thick denim jeans, plus boots with ankle protection and no steel toe caps.

## 5 The right instructor

Finding the right instructor can make a world of difference. Personalities vary greatly and it can help a novice rider's progress if their instructor has the necessary people skills to put them at ease and to understand their strengths and weaknesses. This extends to explaining things in a way that is easy to understand and to act on.

## 6 Riding kit

Most training schools will provide the basic kit. However, the sizes are usually based on the average sized man, so for riders who are blessed with small hands, investing in a pair of well-fitted gloves can also make a big difference. Levers can be adjusted for individuals with a smaller reach,



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but if gloves are an inch too big then they will just get in the way.

Helmets also have an important 'fit' factor, but if a rider has an extra small or large head, an ill-fitted helmet can lead to headaches and impaired vision. When buying a helmet, good advice is not to buy blindly, but to try on helmets and be properly fitted. Helmets tend to stretch, so while it might feel comfortable at first, after a few wears, it may become too loose.

## 7 Petite riders

For riders under 5ft 4in, some motorbikes can be too tall, making the whole learning experience more of an uphill struggle. Even where a rider is able to touch the floor on tiptoes it can still be extremely unnerving. Good training schools will be sensitive to these things and will ensure that smaller riders can learn on an appropriately-sized motorcycle. It's a good idea to arrange to sit on a training motorcycle before booking a course. Skilled instructors will give bespoke instruction to help with adverse cambers, junctions and the potential riding challenges that sometimes accompany shorter legs.

## 8 Well-meaning advice

All new riders have friends, family and significant others who may feel inclined to offer well-meaning riding advice. However, not all advice is up-to-date and not all of it is going to be suitable, especially when first learning to ride. Remember – a qualified, experienced instructor is best equipped to help new riders to attain the required standard.

## 9 Adverse weather

Being too hot or too cold can significantly impact concentration, energy levels, skill and rider safety. Novice riders need to master the skill of keeping cool and hydrated in the summer and warm in the winter. Seeking advice is a very good idea.

## 10 VideoBiker

VideoBiker.co.uk offers valuable extra learning and preparation for novice riders embarking on CBT or their full motorcycle licence. As a full-time professional instructor, I recommend VideoBiker to all my students and have seen how well it works alongside practical instruction and how it can help riders to develop their skills.

## About the author



Laura Smith is a full-time motorcycle instructor, certified by the DVSA for the delivery of CBT, Direct Access and the DVSA Enhanced Rider Scheme (ERS). In addition, Laura organises European and UK advanced riding tours. Laura is a partner at RMT Motorcycle Training in the West Midlands and is founder of Women Only Training ([www.womenonlytraining.co.uk](http://www.womenonlytraining.co.uk)).

